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Latino Advisory Committee

Noticias

Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor
Erwin McEwen, Acting Director

Spring Edition, 2007



18th Annual Latino Family Institute Days



Noticias

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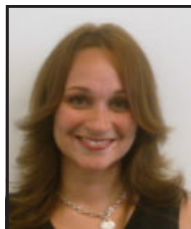
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Welcome from the Chairperson

Dahlia Roman

Welcome to our Winter/Spring edition of *Noticias*. It has been a very busy but great year for me as the chair for both the Latino Advisory Committee (LAC) and the 18th Annual Latino Family Institute Planning Committee. It has been a blessing to be surrounded by so many wonderfully talented professionals whose dedication has continued to inspire me.

With this said, I begin by highlighting the success of the Latino Family Institute Days and being thankful to all who participated in the planning process. We learn from each year's conference and use that to plan a bigger and better one for the following year. This year's planning has already begun and I encourage you all to somehow become involved. Remember this is your Institute as well, and again we are fortunate to have the experience and expertise of so many of you who help make it a wonderful learning experience.

We also highlight that our annual *Octavitas* activity in January was a great success. We had a great turn out. We had great feedback. We hope to expand the participation and add to this wonderful event.

I also want to take the time to remind you that LAC continues to work on issues that affect our Latino children and families and impact how you do your work. LAC is here to advise the Director on matters that affect the workers and the families we serve. While those changes seem out of reach at times, our goal is always the same and that is to continue our advocacy, promote awareness, and ultimately affect change. In order to do so we encourage you to get involved with any of the various subcommittees we have. You do not have to be a member of LAC to be a member of a subcommittee. We ask that you consider participation in any one of these subcommittees so that you too can help affect change:

1. Employee Issues
2. Youth Services
3. Newsletter (*Noticias*)
4. Private Sector
5. Service/Resource

As I near the end of my time here as the chair for LAC, I would like to thank everyone for all of their support, input, and advise. I am so grateful to have been given such a wonderful opportunity. I have really enjoyed learning from everyone. I applaud you all for the hard work and dedication you continue to give to our families

Wishing you all well! ¡Gracias por esta oportunidad!

Respectfully,
Dahlia Roman, Chair
Latino Advisory Committee

18th Annual Latino Family Institute Days

By Dahlia Roman

The 18th Annual Latino Family Institute Days was held on November 2 and 3, 2006, at the Hickory Ridge Marriott Conference Center in Lisle. The theme, "The Impact of the Child Welfare System on Latino Immigrants: El Impacto Del Sistema De Bienestar Social En Los Inmigrantes Latinos," reflects best practice and the position and direction of the Department.

The Office of Latino Services, Latino Advisory Committee, Latino Consortium, Office of Training and Conference Planning Committee members came together to plan and facilitate this venture for another year. Then-DCFS director, Bryan Samuels, reconfirmed his commitment to ensuring that quality training is provided to frontline staff, with an emphasis on the important role and impact that culture, language and the issues surrounding immigration have when providing services to our children and families.

A wide variety of workshops were offered, including a training module from Loyola University. A presentation during the general session by both current and emancipated Latino youth was both eye opening and inspirational.

Keynote speaker Jesus Garcia of the Little Village Community Corporation and a

current foster parent shared his personal experience as someone who is a foster parent and who comes from an immigrant family. He emphasized how important taking into account language barriers and culture is to helping families integrate information and getting them through and out of their situations. His presentation was very heartfelt; he acknowledged that being a social service provider is one of the hardest and often most thankless jobs. He reminded us that our work matters and graciously thanked us all on behalf of those children and families who may never had the opportunity to do so.

The driving force behind last year's Institute Days was the commitment and unity of all the professionals involved with planning this successful conference. The efforts highlighted the knowledge, expertise, desire and diversity of individuals who joined in the structuring of this event.

We would like to acknowledge and give thanks to Jesus Martinez, Chief of Latino Services, and the enormous amount of time, energy and commitment that Jose Lopez, Assistant Chief of Latino Services, spent in the evenings and weekends working on behalf of the Institute Days. We also want to thank the youth participants for the courage to share their stories, recognizing the excellent work done on their behalf and expressing their hopes for change in areas that need improvement.

We hope that some of you will make a commitment to be a part of this year's 19th Annual Latino Family Institute Planning Committee. If you are interested please contact this year's Conference Chairperson, Maria Calderon, at 773-866-5806 or via e-mail at Maria.Calderon@illinois.gov. We look forward to hearing your ideas and having your input in making this year's Latino Family Institute Days even better than last year.



Institute attendees were treated to an exciting Cultural Presentation.

Latino Advisory Committee Members

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Joseph Becerra

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Sylvia Fonseca

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Madeline González-García

Evelyn Martinez

Dora Maya

Miriam Mojica

Asela Paredes

Milagros Rivera

Hector Vázquez

Ex Officio Members

José López

2006 Latino Family Institute Awards

Every year at the Latino Family Institute (LFI), individuals are recognized for their commitment and for their achievements in working with Latino families and children. The following excerpts were taken from the nomination forms submitted to the LFI Awards Committee.

Catalina and Andes Valentin

Catalina and Andes Valentin were honored as the 2006 Bilingual Foster Parents of the Year. This couple has taken in a number of youth, from days-old infants to teenagers, and have showered them all with the love needed to get through the difficulties of foster care. A sibling group in their care returned home in 12 months—and these foster parents have remained connected to them, have had visits with them and have been gracious enough to keep them when the biological mother has been in the hospital. They continue to support the biological mother since the children have returned home and they are a part of her support system that was integral to the reunification of the children. Because they are bilingual/bicultural, they taught the children their colors and alphabet in both languages and maintained their language skills so that when the children returned home they were able to fluently communicate with their mother while also being able to excel in school.

Rosa Frias

Rosa Frias was honored as the 2006 DCFS Employee of the Year. She has shown exemplary professionalism and commitment to the Department and the families that she serves. While in school for her MSW, the Joliet Field Office was short staffed and had a high volume of investigations coming in. Rosa didn't complain about the number of investigations assigned to her, or ask for special consideration due to her school requirements. She is so committed to the Latino community that she has volunteered to be available to her peers after hours when there is a need to have a

Spanish-speaking worker. She actively seeks out community providers to ensure that the families receive needed assistance. She works tirelessly with her families to keep them together but always keeping in mind the safety of the children. Her commitment to the Latino community does not stop after five o'clock. She is a biological mother of three but a committed mother to many other children in the community. She imparts wisdom, values and pride into their lives. She is an example of a woman of courage, commitment, and faith.

Carlos Argueta

Carlos Argueta was honored as the 2006 POS Employee of the Year. He has dedicated himself to developing his skills as a professional who is committed to improving the lives of and advocating for Latinos. Not only did he use his bilingual and bicultural skills to create a much-needed culturally sensitive therapeutic environment for DCFS wards, he also undertook the educating of professionals within and outside the agency regarding issues impacting Latinos in care.

As an experienced bicultural professional, he is able to show empathy towards both clients and peers in a manner that is unfortunately all too rare. He insists and ensures that his staff understands the Latino culture and that all case management services are provided within a sensitive milieu. He attends rallies and marches in support of pro-Latino agendas; he seeks to educate and foster an understanding of Latino issues with all those he comes in contact with; he volunteered to serve as an educator with Loyola University's Latino Child Welfare Training Initiative; and he has taught graduate level courses on multicultural counseling at Concordia University. In summary, Carlos seeks to educate and advocate on Latino issues in virtually every facet of his life, from formal activities to brief encounters he has with people.

Latino Family Institute Celeste Peña Community Service Award 2006

The Celeste Peña Community Service Award for 2006 went to Dora Maya, President and CEO of Arden Shore Child and Family Services since 1999. She has been instrumental in securing services specifically for Latinos in the Northern Region. In quoting her colleague, "Every family serviced today, if not for Dora, would not be getting services." As a credit to Dora, Arden Shore is capable of offering all of their current social services in a bilingual/bicultural manner, ensuring Latino clients receive the same high level of quality services as English-speaking clients.

Last September, Dora was instrumental in securing needed funds in order to provide mental health services to Latino Families and their children. There is now a mental health program for seriously emotionally disturbed Latino children and adolescents named LISTO: Latino Intervention Services for Therapeutic Outreach. Because of her advocacy on behalf of Latino children and their families, the continuation of this much-needed program for Latino children in Lake County will continue.

Dora has been instrumental in coordinating educational community services by providing a prostate cancer awareness program and financial fairs/seminars for Latino families. She also secured funds to expand the programs offered at Arden Shore's Waukegan Community Health Education and Prevention Center. Arden Shore will now play a crucial role in educating and raising awareness in the Latino community, especially teenagers, about HIV-AIDS. She was also instrumental in securing bilingual/bicultural in-home counseling for children and families where issues of truancy, other school issues, and possible suspension from school are also discussed and handled.



2006 Celeste Peña Community Service Award winner Dora Maya, and the staff of Arden Shore Child and Family Services.

Dora has also helped secure bilingual/bicultural in-home services for families experiencing domestic violence. Every service that Arden Shore's child welfare component provides, including group home care, foster care, and adoption, is offered by bilingual/bicultural staff. In addition, Dora secured a contract with DCFS that serves statewide to assist with compliance of the Burgos Decree. This contract allows Arden Shore's bilingual/bicultural staff to service Latino children and parents who are under the contract of an agency that does not have bilingual/bicultural staff.

Dora has been an active member of the DCFS Latino Advisory Committee (LAC) for a number of years. She is co-chair of the Latino Consortium. She collaborates regularly with the DCFS Northern Region Office. She took a lead in developing and coordinating a group of leaders and service agencies in the Waukegan area to address the disparity of representation and services for the Latino community which makes up over 50 percent of the population in the area. The goal was also to make elected officials recognize that Latinos are a force to be reckoned with. Above all, Dora has a strong belief in the empowerment of the Latino community and believes through keeping the Latinos informed and educated we can make the decision that will benefit us all.

Latino Family Institute 2006 Youth of the Year Awards

Ann Maria Banda

Ann Maria Banda was honored as 2006 Youth of the Year. She was able to improve her grades in high school, then she applied for and won one of the DCFS scholarships in 2006. She is now attending her freshman year of college at Western Illinois University in Macomb. She was student of the month at her high school in November 2005 and won the district competition (covering areas in two states) for the Exchange Club, which resulted in a check for \$1500 for school and numerous speaking opportunities. She participated in forums at her high school regarding ways to improve relations between the Hispanic and the Caucasian populations in the community.

As her confidence continues to grow, it becomes more and more apparent that she is a born leader. In a matter of 10 days, she graduated high school, became a permanent legal resident, and won a DCFS scholarship! Her goal is to become a bilingual elementary education teacher. This youth comes from a small community where Hispanic and Caucasian tensions often run high and opportunities for Latino advancement is not readily recognized, yet she's continuing to achieve amazing things!

Gabe Emerick

At the time of Gabe's placement, he was ready to begin the eighth grade. During that year, he performed well in school and received two principal awards for academics. He was a winner in the American Legion essay contest in March of that school year. This award was the result of his essay titled My Role as an American Citizen. In high school, he was active in wrestling, football, soccer, and tennis. He was on the Vandalia wrestling team that received third place in state. He was named to the all-sectional team in soccer his senior year and was also

honorable mention in all conference and leading scorer that year. Gabe was recognized by the local newspaper, the Vandalia Leader-Union, as athlete of the week and was also honored by the Illinois High School Association for exemplary sportsmanship with the Sport a Winning Attitude award. While playing soccer his senior year, he also played football. He continued these activities, held a job outside of school and maintained his grades. Gabe was also in the school play his junior and senior years of high school and participated in the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Following high school, Gabe was awarded one of the four-year college scholarships through the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.

Rocio Sanchez

Rocio Sanchez was also chosen as a 2006 Youth of the Year. She is an honor student with a 3.8 grade point average, but this achievement is distant second to the real success she's accomplished in school: overcoming the stigma of being a DCFS ward and utilizing Special Education services. Her high school was petitioned for a hearing so that she could be accepted as a freshman. Despite her good grades and high grade point average, other circumstances were red flags during the hearing. She was accepted. The truth points to itself: within her first six months, she maintained an "A" average and was transferred into honors-level classes where she remains. The true vindication came at the end of her school year when she was asked by school administration to work as a tutor for other students throughout the summer. She accepted to work as a tutor so that she could serve as a role model for other students with similar backgrounds like herself. In the end, achievements are so often judged by how they manifest and appear from the outside, but this youth is one of those rare students who realizes that true success is simply an expression of who you are on the inside making its way out.

Teen Parent Service Network

By Lynda Swan-McClendon

Teen pregnancy is generally an unplanned event. Approximately four in 10 young women become pregnant at least once before the age of 20. Most adolescents in the custody of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services have histories of sexual abuse, maltreatment, neglect, separation from their parents, and/or multiple placements. When these adolescents become pregnant and are subsequently parenting, it disrupts their ability to successfully transition into adulthood because the developmental tasks of adolescence are altered.

Through the Office of Education and Transition Services, the Department provides a comprehensive array of services to pregnant and parenting teens and youth for whom the Department is legally responsible. These services are contracted through the Teen Parent Service Network (TPSN). TPSN serves the Chicago land areas of Cook County and the five collar counties of DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry and Will.

The Department recognizes that these wards and their children are a family, and the program is designed to ensure that the ward's role and responsibilities as a parent are respected and supported. These youth have the right to select their pregnancy outcome, including deciding to keep and raise the child, adoption, or pregnancy termination.

Pregnant and parenting adolescents served range from the ages of 12 to 23. The population served is females, males (the fathers), their children, and includes the developmentally disabled, the mentally ill, and youth that are viewed as "high risk" (i.e. those wards under age 14).

TPSN is responsible for case management planning, service delivery case monitoring, community coordination, advocacy, information sharing, and evaluation of programs for pregnant and parenting wards. Examples include

health care (pre- and postnatal treatment, the child's health/medical needs); counseling and psychotherapy (emotional well-being); education (special needs, EMH, LD, BD) and career development (Youth In College, ETV, vocational training, employment training/incentives, scholarships); parenting skills (child development); childcare; housing; Independent Living Skills (shopping, cooking, cleaning, money management); recreation; and financial assistance/planning. Services in the community are also provided in order to help youths maintain a connection with family, friends, churches, and other social institutions.

Downstate Pregnant and Parenting Teen services serve the 96 Illinois counties that are not served by TPSN. Downstate Pregnant and Parenting Teen services are provided either by five different agencies that contract with DCFS or by the use of community-based services when available.

The counties currently served by the five agencies are: **Northern Region**—Aunt Martha's Youth Service Center (Kankakee); **Central Region**—The Baby Fold (Livingston, Iroquois, Ford, McLean, DeWitt, Macon, Piatt, Champaign, Vermillion); Crittenton Centers (Peoria, Tazewell); and Tri-County Counseling Center (Calhoun, Greene, Jersey, Macoupin, Montgomery); and **Southern Region**—Chestnut Health Systems (Madison, Bond, St. Clair, Clinton, Washington, Monroe, Randolph).

These agencies provide a different range of services than TPSN. Some of the services provided include: individual parenting support and education, family planning and pregnancy outcomes, stabilization support for the youth's current living arrangement, counseling services relevant to adolescent pregnancy and parenting issues, and linkages to community-based programs. Expansion



of services by the current providers into several additional counties is planned for later this fiscal year.

Services to pregnant and/or parenting youth in counties not currently served by DCFS contracted programs must be provided through community-based programs where pregnant and parenting youth reside. Different counties may have programs available through community colleges, city or county public health offices, Women Infant and Children (WIC) programs, and some Department of Human Services programs if eligibility requirements are met.

It is believed that the provision of services not only increases the self-sufficiency and independence of parenting youth but can also lead to fewer subsequent pregnancies, reduce the potential for abuse and neglect of offspring and can thereby prevent the entrance of these young parents' children into the child welfare system. The Department's intent is to assist and support youth in reaching the goal of economic self-sufficiency and effective parenting in a timely manner.

Las Octavitas celebration

Once again Latinos and their close friends throughout DCFS and POS agencies got together to celebrate a time-honored tradition—gathering. The commemoration of Octavitas is always special because it affords the opportunity to celebrate camaraderie and the treasured cultural bonds we all share. The word “Octavitas” means eighth, and it refers to the eight days which follow the arrival of the Three Kings. In Puerto Rico, this day unofficially ends the holiday season—one in which Christmas Day itself, although important, does not take center stage. The end of Octavitas is a prelude to the beginning of the Lenten season. Owing to the vigilance of cultural devotees like LAC member Miriam Mojica, throughout the years, we have been able to honor and to nurture this link to our roots as well as to one another.

At the end of the evening, event volunteers asked the celebrants to fill out an evaluation that included the following question: “To what extent does this type of activity meet your needs and the needs of other bilingual staff?” Some responses included:

- Provides an opportunity to get to meet other bilingual staff and have some fun.
- I am not bilingual. However, I could see how people were feeling community.



DCFS and POS agency staff get the chance to reconnect at the Las Octavitas celebration.

- Gives staff a chance to have a good time. Also gives staff a chance to not think about cases.
- It's good to develop a sense of Hispanidad within the Department.
- It is a great opportunity to see each other and meet new workers.
- I get to see other bilingual staff that I am not able to see any more as I am no longer in Cook County.
- I really had the chance to connect with other bi-lingual staff that I never had the chance to meet.

Without a doubt, these moments stand out not only because of their cultural significance but also for their power to create a meaningful and healthy sense of community among us all.

“Their voices will be heard”

By Sylvia Fonseca

Did you know that the Department of Children and Family Services has a Youth Advisory Board? In fact, each region has its own Youth Advisory Board (YAB) that meets on a monthly basis. The executive members from each region's board meet together every two months and comprise the Statewide Youth Advisory Board for DCFS.

The YAB advocates on behalf of youth in the care of DCFS regarding issues of concern covering a wide spectrum, from policy to service provision. They, along with staff, plan the graduation celebrations across the state and publish their own newsletter, *For Youth By Youth*. The YAB has also been invited by Cynthia Moreno,

Deputy Director of the DCFS Division of Service Intervention, to participate as presenters at the Youth Summits currently being held around the state.

This leadership group provides a great opportunity for youth to develop strengths and have their voices heard. If you know a youth who is 14 to 21 years of age who is, or has been, in the care of DCFS, get them to a meeting. Once they fill out the membership application, the Chicago Area Project staff will provide transportation to and from the meetings for each region. Please contact Antwan Turpeau at 312-663-3574 ext. 242 for meeting schedules and other information.

DCFS representative appointed to IAHSE



Richard Echevarria

Northern Region Child Protection Advanced Specialist Richard Echevarria has been appointed to the Board of the Illinois Association of Hispanic State Employees (IAHSE). According to Echevarria, the

board is made up of state employees from various agencies that work throughout the state. Presently there are 15 board members. Members attend monthly meetings to discuss issues and other related topics regarding Latino/Hispanic state employees.

IAHSE's mission is to increase the number of Hispanic employees at all levels of state government; to ensure a quality work environment and increase upward mobility for Hispanics in Illinois state government; to increase the number of Hispanics on state boards and commissions; to operate a network for information exchange to assist Hispanics in their careers; to ensure the full delivery of state services and resources to the Hispanic community.

Two particular issues that IAHSE is currently addressing in House Bill 1100, which would give undocumented citizens a license or certificate to drive, and Senate Bill 2043, the Hispanic Employment Plan (HEP). HEP provides that each state agency shall implement strategies and programs to increase the number of Hispanic or bilingual employees in supervisory, technical, professional and managerial positions.

Anyone interested in membership or other information can contact IAHSE by phone at 312-814-8942 or e-mail at iahse.assoc@illinois.gov. The Web site address is www.iahse.org.

Trauma Part III – Compassion Fatigue

By Lori Hunsaker-Smith, LCSW

Trouble sleeping? Difficulty concentrating? Accomplishing less and less? These are but a few of the symptoms of a syndrome known as compassion fatigue. Afflicting those who care for traumatized or otherwise hurting clients, compassion fatigue can cripple the career and home life of even the most tireless worker.

Individuals often miss the first warning signs of compassion fatigue or burnout. Dedicated and hardworking, helping professionals do not take the time to stop and take stock of their own well-being. It is not until they receive a poor performance evaluation or ultimatums from family that helping individuals realize they are in over their heads and sinking fast.

The impact of worker burnout also has a cost to the agencies for which they work. Poor work performance, absenteeism, and high turnover result in huge financial losses for agencies nationwide. When taxed by the symptoms of worker burnout, agencies often respond with punitive rather than palliative measures. Translated into the language of child welfare, these consequences can literally cost lives and the well-being of children and families; this can cause pain and financial loss for generations to come.

While social work and child welfare agencies move to trauma models to understand the pain of their clients, few have employed these models to the care of their employees. The challenge for agencies is to find creative solutions and alternative paradigms to help prevent and address compassion fatigue in their most valuable resources — the workers.

While agencies seek to shift their thinking, there are several ways that individual workers and their supervisors can address secondary trauma in workers.

Compassion Satisfaction

Vanieca Kraus, in a study of sex offender therapists, introduces the concept of compassion satisfaction. Compassion satisfaction is the sense that the worker's contact with the client provides meaning. Kraus' study determined that workers who can develop long-term, sustained relationships with clients report higher levels of compassion satisfaction and prove at lower risk for signs and symptoms of burnout.

In addition, Kraus' study determined that workers who operate as part of a supportive multidisciplinary team with whom they can share their joys and frustrations leads to lower levels of compassion fatigue.

Designing policies and providing opportunities for workers to stay with cases not only has a positive impact on the case outcome but also is beneficial to worker longevity and satisfaction. Coupling child welfare workers with allied professionals — or opening opportunities for inter-disciplinary cooperation — also reduces the risk of worker burnout.

Humor

Television and movies have made much of the use of humor in combating compassion fatigue. Think of the surgeons from *M*A*S*H*. Their sense of mission bound them together and their sense of humor sustained them while treating wounded soldiers in a surgical trauma unit. The writers of this successful television drama intuitively knew what current research demonstrates: laughter is the best medicine.

In an article entitled "Taking Humor Seriously," Stanley L. Witkin quotes, "Humor is a creative act that helps



transform pain and deviance into constructive growth for oneself and clients." Witkin also observes that humor is the glue that holds oppressed and marginalized groups together. Humor provides the salve that allows folks to keep on in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles. For child welfare workers, humor forges a sense of bonding, and hence support, with colleagues also on the front line.

Brain research also suggests that humor speaks to a flexible and creative brain. Humor provides child welfare workers with the opportunity to step back and see their work from a different vantage point. Humor provides the space to think of a different intervention strategy or resource.

Common Sense Steps

Experts urge that first responders and other trauma workers take their scheduled days off. Balancing these short days of respite with the refreshment of a longer vacation gives the body and soul an opportunity to rejuvenate. Restoration of physiological equilibrium decreases worker risk of physical illness.

Keeping connected in healthy life-giving relationships is essential. Opportunities to think, talk, and laugh about things other than trauma reminds us that all of life is not a crisis.

"Taste of Excellence" charity fundraising event

By Evelyn Martinez

A snowy day could not deter the many wonderful supporters of Arden Shore Child and Family Service's 4th Annual wine tasting fundraiser. This year's event was held on February 25, 2007, at Café Pyrenees in Libertyville, IL. The Chicago Northwest Suburban Alpha Phi Alumnae partnered with Arden Shore to sponsor this "Taste of Excellence" event. Several representatives from different wine distributors were on hand to pour a variety of wines from all over the world. It was a wonderful opportunity for wine aficionados and new lovers of wine to sample different varietals and to support a child welfare agency that has 108 years of dedication and service to youth in need.



Illinois State Senator Terry Link, Keith Schoenfeld and Dora Maya attended Arden Shore's Fourth Annual "Taste of Excellence" fundraising event.

Fundraising efforts included a silent auction. Items available for bids included Chicago Cubs tickets, sports memorabilia, personal trainer sessions, gift certificates,

and many other valuable items. All proceeds went to support Arden Shore's efforts in continuing to offer quality services to children and families in need.

Día de los Muertos Ofrenda

By Evelyn Martinez

Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead), November 2, is a tradition of celebrating and honoring loved ones who have passed on to another life after death. The holiday is recognized not only in Mexico but several other Latin American countries. Death is seen as the next part of a journey, an extension of life. The deceased are celebrated in many different ways: family altars created at home, parades, and picnics at the cemetery where gravesites have been decorated. This holiday is not considered a sad event but rather one of celebration of the life of the individual who has passed. This is communicated in many homes by making an *ofrenda* (altar) that may contain pictures, belongings, and favorite things pertaining to that person who is being remembered.

The Latino Advisory Committee (LAC) sponsored a simple but meaningful *ofrenda* at the Latino Institute Days on November 2 to commemorate this event.

Institute attendees were invited to participate by bringing a framed picture of a loved one to display on or around the altar located in the exhibits room at the hotel. Those who were not able to display pictures participated by writing their loved one's name on a colorful piece of paper and placing it on the *ofrenda*. Together we were able to redeem and reclaim our past that helps to keep the spirit of our traditions and culture alive. Thank you to everyone who participated and helped make this a beautiful display.



News from the Latino Advisory Committee

Special thanks!

The members of the Latino Advisory Committee (LAC) and staff of *Noticias* would like to express our gratitude and best wishes to our compañero Kenny Martin Ocasio who has left LifeLink Latino Family Services to pursue another career. Soon he will be Doctor Ocasio, and we all pray he will not forget the little people back here where he started. Whether he was MC'ing an event or dissolving tension with his unique humor and wit, Kenny has been a most colorful and joyful member of LAC through the years. We will all miss him deeply. ¡Buenísima suerte Kenny!

Congratulations! It's a Boy!

We would like to announce the birth of Jarell Andrey Rojas, born on February 20, 2007 at 12:09 p.m. Jarell weighed in at 9 pounds 9 ounces and is 21 inches long. As you might recall, Jarell's mommy, Krissia Pleitez-Rojas made quite the impression during our 18th Annual Latino Family Institute Days in November 2006. Krissia and her husband, Roberto, wanted to share their wonderful news with Krissia's "other" family - DCFS!

News from the Latino Consortium

Luis Barrios has returned to serve as the director of the Latino Consortium effective November 2006. Barrios brings a wealth of experience to the field of child welfare as well as years of continued work on social services development and advocacy for Latino families. He will resume work on the training grant with Loyola University, recruitment of foster homes, and resource development. A strategic plan is also in place with specific tasks and activities that require focus and attention. Luis Barrios can be reached via phone at 773-626-7151 (press 0) or e-mail luis.barrios@latinoconsortium.org.

AAAC and LAC Joint Meeting

The AAAC and LAC meet twice a year to discuss issues that affect both committees in their advisory roles to the Director. The committees last met on December 20, 2006. As is the tradition, the committees take turns hosting a luncheon before the meeting. Just before the meeting, DCFS Acting Director Erwin McEwen joined committee members for lunch. He extended an open door policy to both committees.

During the meeting, the committee followed up on the ongoing work on behalf of incarcerated youth and discussed new initiatives and problems regarding visitation of incarcerated youth in care. The Salvation Army and Lutheran Social Services both have initiatives on the preventative side, whereas for youth in care, caseworker visitation is vital to their success after incarceration. Many detention centers are asking for DCFS IDs for visiting caseworkers as well as driver's licenses and other information. Recent reorganization with the judicial system regarding the separation of juveniles and adults has made it difficult to progress in this area. Nonetheless, both committees remain committed to helping improve the odds for success for this special population.

The committee also discussed employee recruitment and retention. As some of us may remember, the hiring process through CMS is a lengthy one, and many prospective workers become discouraged during the process. The application is also a problem in that the language used in the job descriptions is very exact and some qualified applicants may not be graded according to their actual qualifications. A new application is due out sometime this year that may help to alleviate some of the current application pitfalls.

The committee also discussed permanency enhancement and the planning of the 2008 training institutes sponsored by each committee.

Wendy's Wonderful Kids

by Glory Vazquez

Wendy's Wonderful Kids is the first nationwide program that partners a major corporation with a national foundation and local communities to place foster care children in permanent homes. The goal of *Wendy's Wonderful Kids* is to find an appropriate, permanent, and loving adoptive family for each child waiting in the foster care system.

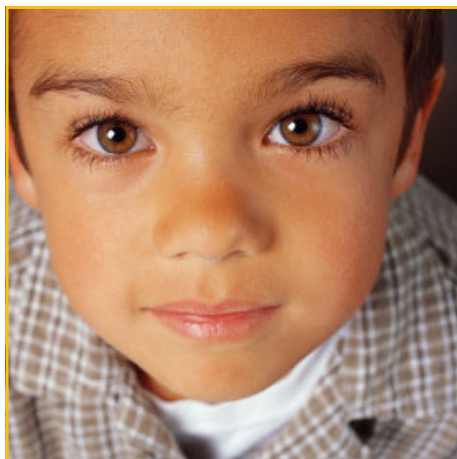
Currently, foster care social workers do not have enough time and resources to both ensure the safety of the children under their care and actively recruit adoptive families for those waiting to be adopted. More than 2,000 children were adopted from foster care in Illinois, but over 3,600 were available for adoption. Many children in foster care wait five or more years before they are adopted.

In only two years, *Wendy's Wonderful Kids* recruiters across the nation have helped more than 1,000 children in foster care be matched with or adopted by their permanent families. The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption created *Wendy's Wonderful Kids* to focus on the thousands of waiting children in foster care who deserve to be adopted. *Wendy's Wonderful Kids* is the signature, direct-service program of the Foundation that dedicates funds raised by Wendy's restaurants directly to finding adoptive homes for children in foster care.



In Chicago, Casa Central is one of two social service agencies working closely with *Wendy's Wonderful Kids* to identify potential adoptive families. I am a recruiter for this program. My role is to develop a caseload of children who may be eligible for our program. I am looking for potential foster care children within Illinois that are in need of a permanent adoptive placement. Eligible children may include those who are in the adoption process, those who may have had prior recruitment efforts, and those who have been waiting for adoption for varied lengths of time. The children must have a permanency plan for adoption or have been freed for adoption, and must be without a current adoptive family. I work closely with the case manager to help achieve the adoption permanency goal by meeting with and assessing the minor, developing a recruitment plan, and diligently searching for a potential adoptive family. During this process I will continue to network by maintaining regular and ongoing contact with persons close to and knowledgeable about the child (caseworker, foster parent, attorney, teacher, therapist, etc.).

For more information on how to become an adoptive family or for more information, call Casa Central at 866-409-1990.



Upcoming Latino Events

The Office of Latino Services / Office of Affirmative Action invites you to volunteer and represent your agency! For volunteer opportunities and more information, please contact Jose Lopez at 773-292-7868 or Jose.J.Lopez@illinois.gov.

<u>DATE</u>	<u>EVENT</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>
May 6	Little Village Cinco de Mayo Festival	26 th Street, Cicero
May 15	Annual Illinois Association of Hispanic State Employees (IAHSE) Capitol Day Reception	State House Inn, Springfield
May 31	Illinois Association of Agencies and Community Organizations on Migrant Affairs Conference	Starved Rock, Utica
June 9	30 th Annual Puerto Rican Peoples Parade	Western & Division Streets, Chicago
June 10	Viva los Niños/Children Festival – Harrison Park Univision Radio Group & Merit School of Music	1800 S. Wood Street, Chicago
June 12-17	Puerto Rican Humboldt Park Festival	California & Division Streets, Chicago
June 13-15	Latino Social Workers Annual Conference	St Augustine College, Chicago
June 16	Puerto Rican Day Parade (Downtown)	Columbus Street, Chicago
June 22	Hispanic Alliance for Career Enhancement (HACE) 22 nd Annual Career Conference	Stephens Convention Center, Rosemont
July 26-29	Fiesta del Sol Festival – Pilsen Community	Cermak & Racine, Chicago
August 25-26	18 th Annual Viva Chicago Latin Music Festival	Grant Park, Chicago
August	2007 Hispanic Business Expo Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce	Navy Pier, Chicago
September	Hispanic Heritage Organization Annual Celebration	Location to be announced, Chicago
September	Puerto Rican Festival	Division Street, Chicago
September 9	26 th Street Mexican Parade 26 th & Sacramento	Chicago
September 8-9	Mexican Festival (26 th Street)	26 th Street, Chicago
October 4-5	Hispanic Mental Health Conference Week	Location to be announced, Chicago
October 24	Illinois Hispanic Scholarship Fund / IAHSE Banquet	Holiday Inn Chicago Mart Plaza, Chicago
October 25	20 th Annual IAHSE Conference	Holiday Inn Chicago Mart Plaza, Chicago
October	IMAGE Scholarship Banquet	Location to be announced, Springfield
November 1-2	DCFS 19 th Annual Latino Family Conference	Hyatt, Lisle
November	Annual Hispanic Book Fair Festival	Unity School, Cicero
December	Illinois Latino Legislative Caucus Foundation 5 th Annual Conference	Location to be announced, Rosemont

Noticias is brought to you by the Latino Advisory Committee and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. It is distributed to DCFS employees, POS agencies, and agencies affiliated with DCFS. The newsletter includes articles pertinent to child welfare, Latino welfare issues, and DCFS/POS programs, and strives to be an informative source for staff by providing updates on new child welfare initiatives as well as upcoming events.

It is our hope to continue providing staff with a vehicle for the sharing of information. In this endeavor, we are looking for your input, submission of articles, and suggestions for improving *Noticias*. Articles related to your

experiences with families and personal stories are also greatly appreciated. Please submit articles, information about upcoming events or news to:

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If you would like more information or would like to participate in one of the LAC subcommittees, contact Maria Calderon at Maria.Calderon@illinois.gov.



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Jenny Florent, DCFS Division of Communications; Michael Holmes and Roberto Sanabria, DCFS Office of Affirmative Action; and Jesse Martinez and Jose Lopez, DCFS Office of Latino Services

Latino Advisory Committee
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